

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL</b>	
	<b>Chapter 4:</b> Assessment (Investigation)	<b>Effective Date:</b> July 1, 2007
	<b>Section 14:</b> Examining a Child	<b>Version:</b> 1

<b>POLICY [NEW]</b>	<b>OLD POLICY: N/A</b>
---------------------	------------------------

- The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will, as necessary to confirm alleged or suspected bodily injuries, visually examine an alleged child victim.
- DCS will obtain consent from the parent/guardian/custodian prior to examining a child unless there are exigent circumstances. See separate policy, [Exigent Circumstances](#).
- DCS will not examine children who are alleged to be sexually abused, regardless of the age of the child. Examination of such children will occur at a medical facility. See separate policy, [Medical and Psychological Examinations, Drug Screens and Substance Abuse Evaluations](#).
- An FCM will not examine a pre-pubescent or older child of the opposite gender.
- When examining a child aged two and older, the FCM will use standard precautions to observe the child's injuries without examining the child's anus, genitalia or chest, unless the FCM and the child are in the presence of a medical professional.

See also related policy, [Photographing Trauma](#).

#### Code References

- [IC 31-33-8-7 Scope of investigation by department of child services; order for access to home, school, or other place, or for mental or physical examinations](#)

<b>PROCEDURE [NEW]</b>
------------------------

The FCM will:

- Get consent from the parent/guardian/custodian to examine the child if the CA/N allegations warrant such action or if during the interview with the child the FCM sees signs or hears information that leads to suspicions of physical injuries.
- Seek a court order if consent is not given and no exigent circumstances exist.
- Reassure the child, to gain rapport before initiating the examination.
- If, despite the FCM's efforts to reassure the child, the child's discomfort level is too high to complete an examination, discontinue efforts to examine the child and make alternate arrangements.
- Observe the child to determine if there are external marks (e.g. - cuts, bruises, welts, burns, scratches, sores, etc.) that may have been caused by CA/N.
- Take photographs of any trauma. See separate policy, [Photographing Trauma](#).
- Make detailed notes about each injury (e.g. - location, color, shape, size and whether open, raised, etc.)
- Refer the child as needed for further examination by Medical, Dental and Mental Health Professionals. See separate policy, [Medical and Psychological Examinations, Drug Screens and Substance Abuse Evaluations](#).

## RELATED INFORMATION

### **General**

When a stranger observes a child's body, it can be frightening for the child. While observing the child, it is important to be clear with the child, speaking calmly and confidently about the process. As the FCM observes the child's body, he/she should tell the child what is happening and what is seen in a logical and descriptive manner. Always ask the child to explain how the injury occurred. The FCM should be sensitive to the child's needs; some children may want to engage in conversation during the exam; others may want to be quiet; some may need to be reassured by the FCM; etc. Despite the FCM's best efforts, some children's discomfort level may preclude examination by the FCM, in which case alternate arrangements should be made to have the child examined by a Medical Professional.

Parents may be reluctant to have their children examined. Their fear and reluctance may be picked up by the child and exacerbate an already anxious situation. Parents need to be told what is happening, why, and how they can help their children. The FCM should enlist the parents' assistance when removing the child's clothing.

### **Standard Precautions When Not in Presence of Medical Personnel**

To avoid observing the anus or genitalia of a child aged two and older, the FCM should ask a child to leave his/her underwear on. The front waistline of the underwear can be lowered to allow observation of the lower abdomen and upper pelvic area. The rear of the underwear can also be lowered completely to expose the buttocks to allow observation.

FCMs should not ask females to remove bras. The bra should be left on and the child can shift from side to side, the straps of the bra to observe the areas of the chest and back directly under the straps.

### **Witnesses**

It is always good practice to have an adult witness present when examining a child, if possible and practical. Depending upon the circumstances, an appropriate witness may be another FCM, a Law Enforcement Officer, the child's parent/guardian/custodian, etc. **[NEW]** The FCM should document thoroughly name and title of witness (e.g. – FCM, Law Enforcement Officer, Social Worker, parent/guardian/custodian, etc.).

## FORMS AND TOOLS

- N/A